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## **ARTHUR VAN DYKE PIERSON, THE MAN.**

### **Sketches of his Life's History.**

[By D. T. TRIMMER.]

This address was delivered in the beautiful and useful Smith Memorial Building, the gift of which to the city of Lexington, we are learning to appreciate more and more—and will as the years go by—at a meeting held by the McLean County Historical Society, to pay tribute of respect to an honored friend, Arthur Van Dyke Pierson, whose passing occurred in Lexington, January 24, 1916.

The life and character of Mr. Pierson is worthy of more than a mere necrological entry in the annals of McLean County, the State and international historical societies and the Sons of the American Revolution, he being an active and honored member of each and all for many years. His was a full and complete life, not in years, for in that respect he was limited to less than the allotted span, but in all that tends to make a life worth living in and to the community. He believed in the fatherhood of God, brotherhood of man, love of home and family and country. The loss occasioned by his death is not limited to his family, to our historical society, but to the church, the school, the community and McLean County in general.

A. V. Pierson was born May 19, 1849, in Morrow County, Ohio, and was the son of James Scott and Mary Jane (Morrison) Pierson, both of whom were natives of the same state. His was an honored parentage, it is a great inheritance to come of noble and worthy lineage.

The deceased was but four years of age when brought to this county by his parents, they having come overland in wagons, settling in McLean County. In 1855 he came to Lexington Township, where he lived the rest of his life. He was married to Miss Carrie Smith, March 30, 1876, at the home of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Milton Smith. They

were the parents of three children, Lawrence, deceased, Anna and Madge, both at home. Mr. Pierson's death occurred at his home in Lexington, January 24, 1916. The funeral services were held from the Presbyterian church and were conducted by the pastor, Rev. William Torrance. The body was laid to rest in the family burying ground at Pleasant Hill.

He was a successful and scientific farmer and stock raiser, and continued along that line while his health would permit. On or about sixteen years ago the farm of 160 acres was turned over to Mr. Newton Brown, who still occupies it; nothing but a verbal contract has ever bound them, a share of the grain was to be delivered at the elevator, a nominal sum was to be paid for the grass and pasture land, fuel and produce was to be brought to the owner of the farm. The original price agreed on has never been changed and the fluctuation in prices of labor and produce has been considered fair on one side and the other. Mr. Brown has nothing but praise for the honesty and uprightness of his landlord, and Mr. Pierson would say the same of Mr. Brown.

Mr. Pierson was not only a member and elder in the Presbyterian church, but took great interest in every department. He was also president of the Lexington Public Library board, and was connected with the Pleasant Hill Cemetery Association. For many years he was the local correspondent for the Lexington *Unit-Journal* and the *Bloomington Pantagraph*.

His patriotism and desire to take part in the Civil War caused him to misrepresent his age by one year, and of course his parents caused his enlistment to be annulled. Although prevented from taking part in the war, Mr. Pierson was a close student of all matters pertaining to it and was familiar with the details of all important battles and the adjutant general's reports. The old soldiers all knew to whom to go for any information pertaining to the war.

The first voting list of Lexington Township, that is now in the Pierson home, is an interesting and valuable relic, and it will be donated to the county historical society. If there are those who think old relics and things out of the ordinary are not worth while, please consider what Lin-

coln's lost speech, which was delivered in Bloomington more than sixty years ago, would be worth in dollars and cents besides the thanks of all the people.

As a writer Mr. Pierson learned the power of the printed page, yet he laid no claim to being a brilliant writer; he simply had the happy faculty of writing what his readers most wished to know and of saying it in a way they could readily understand. His article on Lincoln and Grant, a few years ago, was printed in pamphlet form and given to his relatives and soldier friends.

No one who wishes to be well informed even on that old, old story, "The Indians," can afford to miss reading his article in the Lexington *Unit-Journal* some years back which occupies a full page of that paper. Here are a few excerpts from this interesting story: "Columbus, not only discovered a new world but a new type of the human race; these Indians were living witnesses to the truth of his statement. There is no subject of more absorbing interest to the historian, than the origin of the North American Indian, their home being in the very heart of our Nation.

"When the French came to America in 1615, they found three great Indian families occupying this county. All agreed that they had occupied this county at least 1,000 years. He was a being of wonderful endurance; without the compass or knowledge of surveying instruments they located and marked the great strategical places in our country.

"The sites of some of our great cities were recognized and selected by them before white men appeared upon the continent. These trails, which were both local and transcontinental, were laid along the lines of least resistance, and our military roads were quite often merely the widening of an Indian trail. The Indian possessed the faculty of not being lost either in forest or prairie. He could unerringly reach his destination.

"The red men have produced some great leaders, viz; King Philip, Red Jacket, Logan, Pontiac and others. There can be no great men without there being great women, hence there must have been some notable Indian women.

"When McLean County's early settlers came they found bands of Indians along various streams and in the

groves, and at first they were peacefully inclined. Later on forts were built for the protection of the early settlers, one just west of Lexington on what is now the J. B. Dawson farm, and was called Fort Bartholmew. Another was near Pleasant Hill, built under the direction of John Patton. A third one in the Henline settlement. These were simply block houses for protection in cases of necessity.

"The great revivals of 1800 in western Pennsylvania, Kentucky, and other places had a most excellent effect on the white people in those regions, and also on the red men as well, many of them were converted, baptized and remained faithful unto death. Missionary zeal was also quickened. The Christian Indian has shown by his conduct that his nature can be changed by Christ's teaching, the same as his white brother.

"In 1854 a Kickapoo Indian from Kansas visited Pleasant Hill at John Patton's. This Indian was born and raised just east of Pleasant Hill and was living there when the Pattons came in 1829. He knew Patton and his family and made them quite a visit. He preached one Sunday in the grove and the entire community was in attendance. He spoke of his father and mother, buried in the Indian cemetery nearby; he spoke of his boyhood days spent in the country roundabout, and the wonderful change that had taken place in the twenty years that had elapsed since his people were in the majority in this county. It was a day long to be remembered by all who heard him. He was about 50 years of age and was a man of education and influence with his people. The Indian was here when the dew of youth was on the North American continent and while he was apparently doomed to extinction, yet the romance of his history will never fade from the land but will be as an ever living monument to his memory."

In the Lexington *Unit* of September 18, 1902, Mr. Pier-son gave an interesting article on "First Things":

"The first white man to settle near Lexington was John Patton, about March 1829, he of course built the first house and it is still standing. The first voting was done in this house in 1831. The first schoolhouse was built of logs and stood just south of where Mrs. George Bradford now lives,

A. J. Flesher taught there in 1843. The first gristmill was built by John Haner and was erected on the land now owned by Stephen Finley. The first sawmill was in 1836 and was built by John Patton. The first brick house was built by J. B. Thompson in 1838. The first orchard planted in 1831. The United Brethren were the first to organize a church in 1830. Dr. Abbott Goddard was the first practicing physician. The first white child born in our township was J. W. Brumhead, July 27, 1829. The first deaths, that of two infant children of Mr. and Mrs. Aaron Foster, 1829."

To Mr. Pierson belongs the credit of making known the earliest bit of local history we have been able to record thus far. He was in Clark County, Illinois, about 1866, and there met a man named Charles Lee, who had visited the Indian village, in what is now this county, along with a band of travelers from Delmont, Michigan, in the years of 1805 and 1812. The account is very interesting as it relates the fact that the buffalo and elk were running wild here at the time of these visits in 1805, and they seemed to have disappeared in this territory by the time of his last visit in 1812. Mr. Lee was born in Detroit in 1790, but when and where he died we do not know. We should be glad to know more about him.

To Mrs. Pierson, the widow of A. V. Pierson, and to the daughters, Misses Anna and Madge; the McLean County Historical Society, mindful of its own loss, extends its deepest sympathy in the loss of this faithful and affectionate husband and father.

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### **ARTHUR VANDYKE PIERSON.**

[By ANNA M. PIERSON.]

Arthur Vandyke Pierson was born May 19, 1849, in Morrow County, Ohio, and was the elder son of James Scott Pierson and Mary Jane (Morrison) Pierson, both of whom were natives of the same state and trace their ancestry back to John and Abraham Pierson, who were Normans and went to England with William the Conquerer. They were men of arms under that famous commander. The family in America was first represented by Abraham Pierson, who emigrated from Yorkshire, England, in 1639, and who located in Lynn,

Massachusetts. On account of his persecution because of his religious views, he later moved to Long Island, New York.

The Cook branch of the family trace their ancestry back to Francis Cook, who at the age of 40 years, came to this country in 1620, in the Mayflower. The Cooks were also among the Crusaders of 1191.

The deceased was but four years of age when brought to this country by his parents, settling in McLean County, they having made the trip overland in wagons. In 1855 he came to Lexington Township, living on a farm four miles southeast of Lexington, and he lived the rest of his life near and in Lexington. He was married to Miss Carrie Smith, daughter of Milton Smith and Lydia (Goddard) Smith, pioneers of Lexington Township, March 30, 1876, at the home of her parents, south of Lexington, now known as Selma. They were the parents of three children, Lawrence, deceased; Anna and Madge Pierson.

Mr. Pierson was a farmer and followed this occupation as long as his health permitted. He was also an elder and member of the Presbyterian church, and held the office of eldership up to his death. He was active in the business life of Lexington, and held several offices, and at the time of his death he was president of the Lexington Public Library Board. He was also a member of the Sons of the American Revolution, the National Historical Society, the Illinois State Historical Society and the McLean County Historical society.

Mr. Pierson was authority on historical matters of the locality of Lexington and vicinity, and was a fluent writer of historical events both locally and of the United States, and often contributed to the local and county papers and to other publications.

His death occurred at his home in Lexington, after a lingering illness of several years duration, January 24, 1916. The funeral services were held from the Presbyterian church, January 26, the Rev. Dr. Torrance conducting the services and the burial took place in the family lot at the Pleasant Hill cemetery.